

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

Amend claims 14-19 and cancel claims 20 and 21 as indicated below.

1 (original): A process for preparing a metal salt of a perfluorinated polyether having at least one carboxylic acid end group, comprising:

treating a fluorinated polyether having at least one carboxylic acid end group with a metal salt of a volatile organic acid under reaction conditions effective to convert all carboxylic acid end groups to the salt form and volatilize the resulting organic acid, thus providing a reaction product comprising a salt of the metal and the fluorinated polyether.

2 (original): The process of claim 1, wherein the fluorinated polyether is a perfluorinated polyether.

3 (original): The process of claim 2, wherein the perfluorinated polyether is comprised of monomer units having the structure -CF₂-O-, -CF₂-CF₂-O-, -CF(CF₃)-O-, -CF(CF₃)-CF₂-O-, or a combination thereof.

4 (original): The process of claim 3, wherein the perfluorinated polyether is a linear polymer.

5 (original): The process of claim 4, wherein the perfluorinated polyether has a single carboxylic acid end group.

6 (original): The process of claim 4, wherein the perfluorinated polyether has two carboxylic acid end groups.

7 (original): The process of claim 2, wherein the metal salt is an alkali metal salt.

8 (original): The process of claim 7, wherein the alkali metal salt is a sodium salt.

9 (original): The process of claim 2, wherein the volatile organic acid is acetic acid.

10 (original): The process of claim 7, wherein the volatile organic acid is acetic acid.

11 (original): The process of claim 8, wherein the volatile organic acid is acetic acid.

12 (original): The process of claim 2, wherein the reaction conditions comprise heating a mixture of the fluorinated polyether and the metal salt of a volatile organic acid at a temperature of at least about 130 °C for at least 48 hours.

13 (original): The process of claim 2, further comprising isolating the reaction product.

~~13-14~~ (currently amended): The process of claim ~~12~~ 13, wherein the product is isolated by an extraction process.

~~14~~ 15 (currently amended): The process of claim ~~13~~ 14, wherein the extraction process employs a fluorinated alkane solvent and a lower alkanol.

~~15~~-16 (currently amended): The process of claim ~~14~~ 15, wherein the extraction process employs perfluorohexane and methanol.

~~16~~-17 (currently amended): The process of claim 2, wherein the perfluorinated polyether has a number average molecular weight in the range of approximately 500 to 10,000.

~~17~~-18 (currently amended): The process of claim ~~16~~17, wherein the perfluorinated polyether has a number average molecular weight in the range of approximately 1000 to 5,000.

18-19 (currently amended): The process of claim 4718, wherein the perfluorinated polyether has a number average molecular weight in the range of approximately 2500 to 3500.

20-21 (cancelled)